

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Says U.S., U.K. Stand Together for Freedom

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Because of their shared ideals of human freedom and human dignity, the United States and the United Kingdom must stand together in defense of revolutionary movements across the world as people seek to peacefully claim the rights that Americans and Britons already enjoy, President Obama told British lawmakers.

Speaking before the British Parliament in London May 25, Obama paid tribute to protesters in Tehran, Iran; Damascus, Syria; Cairo; and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa, and called for the United Kingdom and the United States to jointly support them.

"In country after country, people are mobilizing to free themselves from the grip of an iron fist," he said. "We are the nations most willing to stand up for the values of tolerance and self-determination that lead to peace and dignity."

The president said Britain and the United States have multicultural and multireligious societies that demonstrate to others that "it is possible for people to be united by their ideals, instead of divided by their differences, that it's possible for hearts to change, and old hatreds to pass."

Because of the countries' openness and diversity, descendants of former British colonial subjects are now able to serve in the British Parliament and "the grandson of a Kenyan who served as a cook in the British Army" can "stand before you as president of the United States," he said.

What the world is seeing in the political unrest in the Middle East is "a longing for the same freedoms that we take for granted here at home," and "a rejection of the notion that people in certain parts of the world don't want to be free, or need to have democracy imposed upon them," Obama said.

It is also a rebuke to al-Qaida's worldview, which "smothers the rights of individuals" and would subject the people of the region to "perpetual poverty and violence."

"Let there be no doubt: The United States and United Kingdom stand squarely on the side of those who long to be free," the president said.

Obama urged Britain to join the United States in offering financial support to sustain the democratic revolutions in

Egypt and Tunisia, and to work together to empower developing countries to feed and care for themselves, while rewarding those who confront corruption and allow their people the freedom to innovate and thrive.

"We should advance the truth that nations prosper when they allow women and girls to reach their full potential," he added.

Both the United States and the United Kingdom share "enduring interests" to fight terrorism, even with "partners who may not be perfect," and to protect against disruptions in the world's energy supply, but "we must also insist that we reject as false the choice between our interests and our ideals, between stability and democracy," Obama said.

"Our idealism is rooted in the realities of history — that repression offers only the false promise of stability, that societies are more successful when their citizens are free, and that democracies are the closest allies we have," he said.

Secretary Clinton, Geithner Urge G8 Support for Egypt, Tunisia

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner tell other Group of Eight (G8) ministers that this is the time to support the transitions toward democratic societies and more inclusive economies in the Middle East and North Africa.

"We share a compelling interest in seeing the transitions in Egypt and Tunisia succeed and become models for the region," Clinton and Geithner said in a letter May 25 sent to other finance and foreign ministers attending the G8 summit. "Otherwise, we risk losing this moment of opportunity."

The G8 leaders and ministers are meeting in Deauville, France, May 26–27. Clinton accompanied President Obama on his state visit to London May 25, and later in the day she traveled to Paris to participate in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ministerial council meeting and 50th anniversary commemoration.

The two secretaries said in their letter, which was released to reporters in Washington, that previous experiences from other democratic transitions have shown that the advanced economies of the G8 — which includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — should focus on trade and long-term investment. Achieving economic stability

and democratic governance are essential for the transitions that have begun, they said.

"Our efforts should be aligned with the needs and aspirations of the people of the region," Clinton and Geithner wrote.

Egyptians and Tunisians have called for progress on priority issues: improving financial stability, strengthening the private sector, curbing corruption, creating jobs and further integrating their markets with the region and the global economy, the two secretaries said.

Clinton and Geithner called for G8 ministers to support the Joint Action Plan of the multilateral development banks, with the World Bank and African Development Bank supporting "home-grown" economic policies and reforms. They also called for other nations, including those in the region, to form a long-term partnership in support of Egypt and Tunisia.

The officials also called for help for the two nations to convert debts into investments and for the G8 nations to lead efforts to reorient the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to support democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa, just as it has played a role over the past 20 years in Central and Eastern Europe.

Clinton and Geithner noted that non-oil exports within the Middle East and North Africa account for less than 10 percent of the region's total trade, making it the lowest of any region in the world.

"This lack of regional integration has contributed to chronic unemployment and hindered diversification," the secretaries said.

U.S. Targets More Entities for Violating Iran Sanctions

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States sanctioned several corporations for violating a U.S. ban on investments or exports that support Iran's refined-petroleum industry, and separately sanctioned entities and individuals that have violated laws banning export of technology or materials that could be used for ballistic missiles or weapons of mass destruction to Iran, Syria and North Korea.

The sanctions range from prohibiting the entities from engaging in U.S. foreign exchange, banking and property transactions to denying them U.S. export licenses and U.S. government procurement contracts.

Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg announced May 24 that seven companies have been found to have "engaged in activities related to the supply of refined petroleum products to Iran, including the direct supply of gasoline and related products."

Steinberg said the seven companies are Petrochemical Commercial Company International (PCCI) of Iran and the island of Jersey; Royal Oyster Group of the United Arab Emirates (UAE); Speedy Ship of the UAE and Iran; Tanker Pacific of Singapore; Ofer Brothers Group of Israel; Associated Shipbroking of Monaco; and Venezuela's state oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA).

In July 2010, the Obama administration expanded the 1996 Iran Sanctions Act to authorize unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran's energy and financial sectors in response to the country's nuclear activities and in consideration of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929. The May 24 designation of the seven companies marks the first time the Obama administration has used that expanded authority against entities and individuals that have supported Iran's refined-petroleum sector.

"The intent of sanctions on Iran is to pressure it to comply with its international obligations. In its struggle to secure the resources it needs for its energy sector, Iran repeatedly has resorted to deceptive practices to evade sanctions," Steinberg said.

"Iran uses revenues from its energy sector to fund its nuclear program, as well as to mask procurement of dual-use items," he said. The designation of the seven companies adds "further pressure on Iran to comply with its international obligations."

Steinberg also announced that 16 entities and individuals are being penalized under U.S. law for violating the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act because they bought, sold or transported "goods, services or technologies controlled under the various export-control regimes or otherwise have the potential to make a material contribution to the developments of [weapons of mass destruction] or cruise or ballistic missile systems."

The deputy secretary said those affected by the measure include "three Chinese entities and one Chinese individual, two Belarusian entities, five Iranian entities and one Iranian individual, one North Korean entity, two Syrian entities and one Venezuelan entity."

He added that most were sanctioned "because of proliferation activity involving Iran."

Steinberg said international sanctions imposed in response to Iran's nuclear activities have cost Iran

millions of dollars as a result of the withdrawal of major oil companies and millions more in potential revenue because it converted petrochemical plants to produce gasoline to make up for the shortfalls in gasoline imports.

"There's an international consensus to raise the cost of Iran's refusal to meet its international nuclear obligations," he said. The United States is using the sanctions to tell companies around the world that "those who continue to irresponsibly support Iran's energy sector or help facilitate Iran's efforts to evade U.S. sanctions will face significant consequences."

Budget Cuts Raise Questions on Future of U.S. Military

By Jeff Baron
Staff Writer

Washington — Defense Secretary Robert Gates says he is retiring with important questions unanswered: How much should the U.S. military be prepared to do, and at what cost?

Gates is stepping down in June after four and a half years as defense secretary; he served under two presidents of different political parties, approving and overseeing policies designed to end U.S. combat involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He also has worked to make the Pentagon more efficient in its use of money, and he gave what he called his "last major policy speech in Washington" May 24 with a view to plans to cut federal spending. President Obama has proposed holding growth in the national security budget to slightly below the rate of inflation for the next 12 years.

Gates said the changes already under way in the Defense Department involve reshaping the priorities of the department and the uniformed services while reforming the way they do business: how weapons are chosen, developed and produced; how troops and their families are cared for; how leaders are promoted and held accountable; and where money is spent.

The changes Gates has begun include weapons procurement. "We canceled or curtailed modernization programs that were egregiously over budget, behind schedule, dependent on unproven technology, supplied a niche requirement that could be met in other ways, or simply did not pass the common-sense test," he said. New investments are "on a far more realistic footing."

Still, Gates said, the U.S. military has been wearing out its equipment and needs to replace much of it, as well as produce some new, key pieces: modernized air tankers, strike fighters and ships, including ballistic missile submarines.

Gates also has gone after the Pentagon's overhead costs, but the results have been mixed. "There are still too many headquarters, offices and agencies employing too many high-ranking personnel and contractors, consuming too many resources relative to real military missions and measurable results," he said.

Even with more savings in those areas, Gates said, "real cuts" will be needed in the military. He said he has launched a comprehensive review "to ensure that future spending decisions are focused on priorities, strategy and risks, and are not simply a math and accounting exercise."

The goal would be a smaller but capable military, but Gates added that "a smaller military, no matter how superb, will be able to go fewer places and be able to do fewer things." That might mean giving up on the assumption that the United States must be able to fight two major conflicts at the same time, he said.

In making cuts, Gates said, "people need to make conscious choices about what the implications are for the security of the country, as well as for the variety of military operations we have around the world, if lower-priority missions are scaled back or eliminated."

Although Americans are war-weary after a decade of conflict, Gates said, "the continued strength and global reach of the American military will remain the greatest deterrent against aggression and the most effective means of preserving peace."

International Child Abductions Are on Sharp Rise, U.S. Says

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — International child abductions are rising sharply and that is "a very disturbing trend," a senior U.S. diplomat says.

"International parental abductions affect American families throughout the United States and overseas," says Ambassador Susan Jacobs, the State Department's special adviser for children's issues. "When an international border is involved, an already tragic situation for the children and left-behind parents is infinitely compounded."

The U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports that family members abduct more than 200,000 children every year in the United States. In 2010, parents abducted nearly 2,000 children to and from the United States, Jacobs added, a rise from 1,615 children taken from and to the United States in 2009.

"The children involved in these cases are at risk of serious

emotional and psychological problems,” Jacobs said during a press briefing. National Missing Children’s Day is recognized in the United States on May 25.

“Parents seeking the return of their children or permission to visit them confront unfamiliar legal, cultural and linguistic barriers; they suffer emotional trauma; and they face significant and long-term financial costs,” Jacobs said. The United States works with its embassies and consulates and in cooperation with law enforcement and foreign authorities in resolving many of these cases, she said.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in prepared remarks May 24 that child abductions injure children, their parents, friends and families.

“International parental abduction is a painful scourge for so many, and it is something that deeply concerns me,” Clinton said. “When an abduction does occur ... we work with parents to identify the appropriate response and find the resources that can help bring their children home.”

“In 2010, for example, we helped more than 575 children return to their homes and families, both in the United States and in countries around the world,” Clinton said.

But Clinton said the work extends well beyond individual families. The United States encourages foreign governments to join in helping enforce and support the 1980 Hague Convention on child abductions.

The State Department is the central authority in the United States for the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Jacobs said the United States encourages those nations that have not joined the convention to do so because it provides a civil mechanism to promptly return children who are wrongfully removed or retained outside the country of their habitual residence.

State Department Empowers Women and Girls Through Soccer

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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MEDIA NOTE

U.S. Department of State Empowers Women and Girls Through Soccer and International Exchanges

Building on Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton’s vision to empower women and girls worldwide, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs’ SportsUnited Office will host 18 girls and six coaches from Bolivia,

Germany, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, and South Africa May 31-June 10 in New York City and Washington, D.C.

This international sports exchange leads up to the 2011 FIFA Women’s World Cup and the kick-off to the 40th anniversary year of Title IX -- the U.S. law to provide equal opportunity for men and women in academics and athletics. The exchange also launches a SportsUnited series of international soccer initiatives that highlight the direct connection of empowering women and girls worldwide through sports.

The youth soccer players from around the world will attend a U.S. Women’s National Team training session and the Send-Off Match on June 5 at Red Bull Arena in Harrison, N.J., prior to the team’s departure for the World Cup, which will be played in Germany from June 26 - July 17.

The international delegation will also engage with American youth by playing soccer with local U.S. teams. They will also meet with local community organizations that provide sports opportunities for youth with disabilities and mentorships through a soccer and literacy initiative.

This SportsUnited soccer exchange highlights the importance of what Secretary Clinton calls “smart power,” which uses the full range of diplomatic tools – in this case soccer – to bring individuals together and foster greater understanding among people and cultures.

In addition to this exchange, 2011 SportsUnited exchanges include:

- Former U.S. Women National Team players Briana Scurry and Amanda Cromwell traveled as State Department Sports Envoys to Germany in early May. Click [here](#) for more information on their trip. Sports Envoys are active and retired professional U.S. athletes and coaches who travel overseas to conduct clinics, meet with underserved youth, participate in community events, and lead teambuilding exercises. In July, former U.S. Women’s National Team member Michelle French will travel to Brazil.
- A delegation of coaches from Swaziland participated in a 10-day Sports Visitor program in mid-May, which brings international visitors to the United States for a short-term program, where they participated in clinics and teambuilding exercises, visited local schools, and attended a professional soccer match.
- SportsUnited has also awarded several grants to organizations within the United States to conduct two-way international soccer exchanges. In June, a group of 15 Indonesian female soccer players, ages 15-18, will travel to California and Oregon, where they will visit the Nike

Campus and meet with top women athletes and business leaders. In July, six American soccer experts and coaches will travel to Shanghai, China for ten days to implement coaching clinics and youth sports management training for Chinese coaches.

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